

What's New with the Pig Stands— Not the Pig Sandwich!

We might have forgotten the Pig Stands story long ago if it were not for its enduring pig sandwich and tenacious family ownership. On September 15, 1996, the Texas Pig Stands company celebrated its 75th year of continuous operation, an accomplishment few roadside industries can match. The Pig Stands history is familiar to readers of roadside literature, but for those who are not, the following brief review and update may enlighten you.

In September 1921, the nation's first drive-in restaurant, the Pig Stand, opened in Dallas, Texas, at the corner of Chalk Hill Road and the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike. It was not much to see—really just a small board-and-batten stand set back on a corner lot—but it was destined to revolutionize the food industry in the United States.

The Pig Stand concept was simple: take a basic popular food item, the Tennessee barbecue pork sandwich, combine it with a soft drink (in some locations a Budweiser), and package both with convenience and a fad of the period, the automobile. Thus was born the drive-in restaurant of businessman and entrepreneur Jesse G. Kirby and his financial partner, physician Reuben W. Jackson. These men reasoned that America's love affair with the car would affect the restaurant business, as it already had transcontinental travel and highway construction.

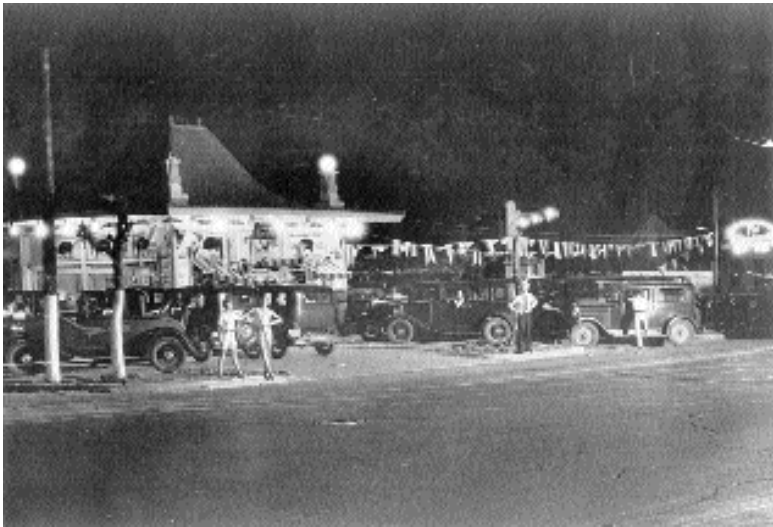
Their drive-in was an overnight success, as the curious and hungry alike converged on the stand to sample the pig sandwich and to be waited on by young men wearing white caps, white shirts, and black bow ties. A word was coined to describe these waiters—"carhops"—because they ran to approaching vehicles and hopped on the running boards before the cars had come to a full stop. As early carhops worked for tips alone, the competition for customers was keen.

At first, Pig Stands were typical roadside stands in a rectangular form with detached barbecue pits at the rear. Large horizontal unglazed windows on three sides fell slightly above the carhops' waistlines, providing them with a counter, and were covered by a wooden panel that dropped down when not in use. The upper facade, lower facade, and sometimes the roofline became prime advertising and menu space. Phrases like "Eat a

Pig Sandwich, " "America's Motor Lunch," or "A Good Meal at Any Time" were interspersed with silhouettes of pigs and essential information like the current menu and the number of the Pig Stand outlets. Another phrase appeared on the early stands, "Quick Curb Service." "Curb service" literally meant service offered to automobiles lined up along the curb. It is also quite clear that the street provided the only parking space, thereby allowing customers to either walk up to the stand or stop their automobiles along the curb.

It was not long before the Pig Stands were cropping up in other parts of Texas and the nation. By 1925, Dallas alone boasted six locations. Between 1921 and 1934, more than 120 Pig Stands were built in Texas, Northern and Southern California, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, Florida, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Alabama. Many of the new stands were operated as franchisees, but the Pig Stand Company maintained most of the Texas locations as a family operation. Although Jesse G. Kirby died within a few years of the first drive-in opening, his son and family worked in Dallas area stands as did members of the Reuben Jackson family. By 1924, the company began to add professional staff to its family-based operation. Sid Lake, a Dallas banker, and others like him, began to transform Pig Stands into a first-class business and prototypical "drive-in restaurant."

The company's image appears to have evolved quickly after professional input in the mid 1920s. Photographs of early stands like Pig Stand No. 18 in Los Angeles (estimated to have opened in 1925) indicate the addition of counter service on stools and signage extended from the roofline. Signage, either attached to the roof or freestanding along the street, became one of the most important new features of the business. In 1922, Pig Stands introduced the neon silhouetted pig described as "in a natural walking position, head down, with the words 'Pig Sandwich' extending from shoulder to hind leg, midway of the body of the hog." The company registered the design, later referred to as the "Sign of the Pig," with the U.S. Patent Office in 1924 (though they did not renew the registration until 1965). This sign and the pig sandwich would be the center of a 1930 court case with the



Pig Stand, Fort Worth, Texas, c. 1928. Night view of late-1920s design showing illumination, "sign of the pig," and head-in parking. Photo courtesy the author.

Dixiepig Corporation and again in 1992 with Hard Rock Cafe.

The first uniform architecture for the Pig Stands Company also emerged in the mid 1920s, probably in 1926-27. The design consisted of a red-tiled pagoda-like roof set on a rectangular building framed of wood and covered in stucco. Three to four large wooden sash windows dominated at least two and sometimes three facades and were covered with advertising or the menu selections. The lower sashes lifted up behind the upper sash creating a counter space for walk-up customers. Variations of the uniform design were found on stands depending on climate and owner preference.

Two significant innovations were initiated at the same time. First, the use of globe lights set on ornamental terra cotta bases on each corner and incandescent lights under the eaves transformed Pig Stands into nighttime activity centers. Lighting, which had become popular with all roadside businesses by this point, existed to attract automobile drivers traveling at increasingly higher speeds as well as allowed for expanded hours of operation. A 1927 newspaper advertisement claimed over 5,000 people in Dallas alone had their evening meal at the Pig Stands. "It's a popular habit to drive to a Pig Stand in the evening, before or after the show, or while out for a drive. Why? Because Pig Sandwiches are something different in taste—yes, unusual! ...Join the 5,000 and avoid the bother of the evening meal," exclaimed the advertisement.

A second innovation also appeared. Automobiles no longer lined up along the curb but parked head first into the building. Photographs dating from the late 1920s indicate that the new pagoda-like buildings were set back more from the street to provide ample room for head-in parking. This arrangement completed the transition from curb service to drive-in restaurant. Although the 1920s design has yet to be attributed to a profes-

sional architect, it was an obvious effort to develop a corporate image through architecture. The outline of the building and signage appeared in many forms of company advertising including newspapers and match book covers. A customer could at first glance recognize the Pig Stand image and connect it to the famous pig sandwich.

Architectural design took a slightly different look in the California Pig Stands. By the late 1920s, an octagonal form appears rather than the rectangular design used elsewhere. Still built as a wooden frame structure with a heavy incorporation of advertising on the principal facades, the new form allowed greater visibility from the food preparation area to the now surrounding parking lot. Two photographs of Pig Stand No. 23 suggest that this wooden frame building became updated by the early 1930s with tile, a slightly more refined advertising image, and a large overhead neon "Sandwiches" sign. It is this creative use of the roof that may have led to the large roof pylons associated with later drive-in restaurants.

By the mid 1930s, Pig Stands were into a new phase of architectural design similar to other drive-in restaurants appearing in California and Texas. Circular, streamlined facades with large surrounding parking lots began to appear on new stands to keep up with the now stiff competition. Neon, generously displayed on facades and signs, completely replaced the earlier globe lights to attract customers.

Although customer demand prompted the company to expand to full service dining by the end of the 1930s, World War II brought a close to the unprecedented growth of Pig Stands. Business continued to be good, but it became more difficult to secure supplies during the war and gas rationing limited travel. Slowly, the stands were sold off, many to employees. The company practice of selling to employees was actually a continuation of the earlier company practice of selling franchises.

In 1955, Royce Hailey, who began his tenure with the restaurant chain in 1930 at the age of 13 as a carhop in Dallas, became president of the company, which was still largely under the ownership of the original investor, Dr. Jackson, and his family. Although all out-of-state operations were sold by 1959, the company continued to operate chains in major Texas cities. In the 1960s, Hailey and several other people acquired the company's stock; he became the sole owner in 1975. In addition to his business expertise, Hailey is credited with developing Texas Toast in 1941 and the chicken fried steak sandwich in the 1940s. In 1983, Hailey sold his interest in Pig Stands to his son, Richard.

Today, Pig Stands can be found in Beaumont, San Antonio, and Houston. Richard Hailey remains dedicated to preserving the heritage of the Pig Stands, and serves as the unofficial historian for the company. The company capitalizes on its history in marketing and promotions, and is considering rehabilitation of the Pig Stand on Presa Street in San Antonio, the only 1920s building still in existence. Recently, Richard Hailey acquired the squatting pig, the well-publicized programmatic structure found a few miles east of the Presa location, and relocated it to his parking lot for rehabilitation. It now sits a few feet away from Hailey's office in a modified Weber Root Beer

stand and is the centerpiece of his own outdoor museum.

For those of you who have not visited a Pig Stand, the original pig sandwich is still on the menu and the company continues its great traditions under family supervision and a glowing "sign of the pig."

This article was written by Dwayne Jones, Assistant Director, National Register Programs, Texas Historical Commission, with assistance from Roni Morales, Managing Editor of the Texas Historical Commission's Medallion.

Jeff Winstel

Petroliana and the Cultural Landscape

Preserving a Gas Station in a Historic Canal Town

The built environment of Boston, Ohio conveys a sense of small town nostalgia. More than the individual historic elements, it is the physical nearness of juxtaposing historic periods that creates a feeling of casualness and accessibility. A visitor to Boston experiences something similar to discovering a rare find at a flea market rather than viewing an interpreted and carefully displayed artifact in a museum. The lack of discernable cultural boundaries in the landscape is best represented by the close proximity of the imposing 1836 Boston General Store to the concrete block 1946 M.D. Garage. These two very different structures from very different time periods, oddly enough, work well together; the contrast between them is typical of small towns,

where land use boundaries are blurred and the village reads as one community.

In October, the Boston General Store opened as a canal boat building museum. Located along the Ohio & Erie Canal's un-watered prism and restored towpath, this Federal/ Greek Revival structure is strongly associated with the heyday of the canal. As part of the restoration and reuse of this structure, the adjacent M.D. Garage will be preserved and used as a maintenance storage facility.

The preservation maintenance work for the garage is a fairly moderate treatment plan, consisting of repairing the existing concrete block walls, metal lintels, and brick sills and chimney. Deteriorated material was replaced in-kind as necessary. The deteriorated composition roofing on a corrugated metal deck was replaced with a con-

temporary flat roof system. The light treatment of the garage structure could result in a nondescript structure overpowered by the extensive restoration of the adjacent Boston General Store. Rather than allowing the small M.D. Garage to become completely obscured by the restored 1836 Canal-era commercial structure, the building will continue to add to the texture of the townscape by reintroducing the vintage pumps and signs.

Built in 1946, this single story M.D. Garage is constructed of concrete block. The building is

The Boston Company Store (left) and the M.D. Garage, summer 1996.

